

## Brainwashed - Winter Family

Written by John Kealy

Saturday, 29 September 2007 17:00 -

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This double album sees Ruth Rosenthal's poetry set to music by her musical partner, Xavier Klaine. Her words and his music create a delicate whole although moments of black humour and irony break through the elegiac moods. Winter Family deal with weighty issues from the most personal to a haunting passage on the Holocaust. Yet this album is surprisingly easy to listen to, despite the serious nature of the words.

### [Sub Rosa](#)

While Rosenthal's poetry is more often than not enthralling, there are times when it does seem a little amateurish. This tends to be mostly due to her delivery rather than her words, on "Ray of Light/No Bad Animals" her voice sounds a little off as she tries to instil some drama into the piece. It does not quite work but it is far from a disaster. Elsewhere, her intonation suits the poetry far better. On "Auschwitz" she plays the part of a child trying to comprehend the incomprehensible, "something for grown-ups I guess." Klaine's jaunty piano is a million miles away from the horror of the concentration camp, much like a child's innocence should be.

Klaine's beautiful arrangements are what make this album work so well. I feel that on its own the poetry does not really stand up to scrutiny, it is good but for the most part nothing particularly special (at least when the poems are in English, I cannot comment on the segments in Hebrew). However, with musical backing the poems are stronger, the weaker passages have something to anchor to and the already strong passages become magnificent. Rosenthal's vocals over the harmonium drones of "Psaume" make for a sacred atmosphere; it is exceptionally beautiful.

Although all of the pieces could have easily fit on one disc, the album has been split into two rather short chunks across the two CDs. This is probably just as well as Winter Family's musical poems can be pretty intense. The break between switching over the CDs provides a welcome breather in the middle of the album. I must admit that by the time the album ends I am in no

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rush to put it back on but this is not due to it being bad or difficult, rather that it is a lot to take in. Overall, Rosenthal and Klaine have created a wonderful document of their work, it is a very natural and human sounding album.

samples:

- [Auschwitz](#)
- [Just Like We Said](#)
- [Republique](#)